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ABSTRACT

This play, intended for middle school and high school students, uses the historical events of the Macartney mission to China from 1792-94 to illustrate the problems that can occur when different cultures interact. The play describes the first major encounter in which government officials representative of the European Enlightenment come face to face with the leadership of the legendary Chinese empire. This one-act play includes three major characters on the British side, three major characters on the Chinese side, and the interpreter. It presents an encounter between differing global interpretive and managerial systems: Imperial Confucianism with its theories about the Mandate of Heaven, and the European enlightenment perspective, as defined by Adam Smith. Questions and outcomes are included for study, as well as seven student projects. (BT)

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Qianlong Meets Macartney

Collision of Two World Views

A Dramatization for Middle and High School Students

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– Kristin A. Coonley

Introduction and Study Guide

Qianlong meets Macartney: Collision of Two World Views

The Setting:

The Macartney mission of 1792-94 is one of more important episodes in the long encounter between China and the modern West. It is not by any means the first, but it is the first major encounter in which government officials representative of the European Enlightenment come faced to face with the leadership of the legendary Chinese empire. Hitherto, enlightened Europeans had read about that empire through letters sent back by the French Catholic missions in China. 18th century philosophes (with the notable exception of Montesquieu) rather liked what they regarded as the rationality and beneficence of Chinese Imperial government. In addition, a taste for Chinese art developed among the European aristocracy. Whole rooms in 18th century European palaces and aristocratic estates were given over to chinoiserie.

The Qing (pronounced *tChing)* dynasty rulers, for their part, developed an interest in the strange new products of Western culture. The Qianlong (*tChienlung)* emperor in particular took a fancy to European art and culture. During his long reign (1736-96) Italian artists produced scrolls and paintings depicting court life and ceremonies and trained Chinese court artists to paint using Western-style perspective. Numerous watches, clocks, utensils with Western art motifs, etc., made their way into the Court furnishings. The most notable concession to Western style came with the construction of the old Summer Palace outside of Peking, which reproduced motifs straight out of Versailles on Qing Imperial soil.

But the Court did not normally permit any concession to Western tastes in how it conducted its ritual ceremonies. Nor could it. These ceremonies, usually carried out in huge formal settings with a cast of hundreds or thousands, represented the Emperor as Son of Heaven mediating with life on earth, the latter represented through people qualified to have access to the Imperial presence. The Emperor himself had to carry out ceremonies mediating with superior authority, such as Heaven, or his forbears, or even his living elders. (For example, the Qianlong Emperor was exceedingly devoted to his mother and went to extraordinary lengths to exhibit his filiality.) His subordinates all carried out comparable rituals within their spheres of jurisdiction.

So when missions came from other countries, they had to fit in with the Confucian system by which relations between heaven and earth were mediated. There could only be one Son of Heaven, so the role of foreigners quite simply was to come as tribute-bearers. Otherwise they would be, ritually speaking, no different from rebels. Most missions were willing to do this, including a Dutch mission which followed on the heels of Macartney's.

Thus Macartney's unwillingness to conform to Imperial ceremonial requiring him to function as a tribute-bearer created a serious and potentially disastrous problem

for the Empire's ceremonial managers. Some of them recognized that he was educated, worldly-wise and well-equipped with goods and chattels. Why couldn't he appreciate and conform to the vital ceremonials by which peace and harmony were maintained and the authority and beneficence of the Emperor as Son of Heaven made manifest? And how could his dissonant conduct be managed so that it did not disrupt ceremonial order?

On the English side, the Macartney mission came armed with a series of goals (only the main ones are reflected in the text) appropriate to an industrializing nation that was rapidly developing a world-wide trading system. As Adam Smith had pointed out, the British were a nation of shop-keepers and traders, and trade was the key to their access to power and prosperity. Basically they wanted to cut through all the rigamarole and restrictions of the trading system set up in Canton and create a free trade environment with China as a whole. They also wanted to establish a direct liaison—along European diplomatic lines—with the Qing Court. And that is what led to all the trouble.

Ideologically, then, the encounter is between differing global interpretive and managerial systems: Imperial Confucianism on the one hand with its theories about the Mandate of Heaven, and the European enlightenment perspective, as defined by Adam Smith, on the other. The encounter is mediated by human beings who try to understand what is going on. Indeed, none tried harder than Qianlong and Macartney. But the systems are incompatible. Macartney is trying to introduce a Western-oriented "peaceful evolution" to China, just as his successors have been doing to the present day. But the Chinese state system has its own goals and power issues, which Western-style peaceful evolution intentionally seeks to change. Thus Qianlong and his aides end up spending most of their time figuring out how to get Macartney and co. out of China. In this respect, Qianlong's problems with Macartney are not so very different from Deng Xiaoping's problems with former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. In the latter case the goal was to get the British out of Hong Kong. Same old story??

The Play :

The play is written to illustrate, and give some human dimension to, the problems set up by the Macartney mission. There were in fact many players on both sides attempting to mediate or interpret what was going on. Our play reduces the cast of characters to three on the British side and three on the Imperial Chinese side, plus the interpreter Rev. Li (Lee), a.k.a. Mr Plumb. All the rest are reflected in the four narrators, of whom one and three represent a sort of common man perspective, while two and four represent individuals with some grasp of the broader issues. Staunton and Zhengrui (*Jerngruey)* are a little bit spoofed and can be played that way. Tom was the sharp-eyed kid who later became Britain's first official China-watcher. Heshen (*Hershen* without pronouncing the r) was Qianlong's favorite and all-powerful minister till the Emperor's death, after which he was quickly disgraced and forced to commit suicide.

Quite a few of the lines are direct quotes from accounts written by some of the British participants, or from memorials and rescripts written on the Chinese side. These are cited in Peyrefitte's study.

The play draws on Western stereotypes of the Chinese and Chinese stereotypes of Westerners. These stereotypes need careful interpretation in class discussion. It would be helpful for teachers to read in advance an applicable historical text, such as those by Fairbank and Spence (see Resources, below), to get a more detailed picture of the historical context, and the functioning of such concepts as the Mandate of Heaven and the Tribute System. The stereotypes derive from incompatibilities in visions of how the world is organized. Such differences in vision still have to be negotiated today; part of successful negotiation consists in understanding and working with them.

Thus one useful classroom exercise would be to discuss whether this mission could have succeeded to any degree with more imaginative or better informed leadership on both sides, or was it doomed from the outset by circumstances beyond the control of the principals? What can we learn about the principles of negotiation by studying this famously abortive mission?

With regard to presentation, one obvious problem is that there are no women specifically identified in the named parts. Almost certainly there were no women in the British mission and for sure none among Chinese officialdom. One way to finesse this problem would be by having female students take on the narrator parts. Or one could adopt the conventions of Zhejiang opera and have female students act all the named male parts (leaving narration to male students). Or one can just not worry about gender identity!

Outcomes for study:

The Macartney mission presents a foretaste of a problem which the Chinese cultural system would have to wrestle with throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. That problem is how to deal with the assertive global system envisioned by the Western enlightenment and expressed through trade, development, war, colonialism, political and economic revolution, and more recently through global institutions such as the UN, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, etc. Can China participate in this modern Western concept of an interactive, multinational global society without losing its own rationale, on which it has depended for 3,000 or more years, of how to manage the human order? The Opium wars, extraterritoriality, the Western missionary movement in China, China's own 20th century revolutions, the wars with Japan, the Korean war, etc, up to the return of Hong Kong to Chinese jurisdiction and China's decade-long application to join the WTO, all represent aspects of this ongoing ideological wrestling match.

Questions for study: What can we learn that will help us to mediate and interpret this clash of ideas, customs, and perceptions? Did the Macartney mission lead inevitably to the Opium wars: what would it have taken to generate different outcomes? What light does the Macartney mission shed on the issues that stand

between the West and China? How can we intepret and mediate those issues today, e.g. as they affect trade and development issues, human rights, competition over strategic resources, and management of strategic problems? At a more immediate and personal level, how can study of such issues help us to deal with ethnic relations within our own communities?

Projects for Students:

1) Create a chart of the Macartney voyage, with notes on all the places that he and his ships visited en route to China.

2) Imagine you are Tom Staunton. Write down in your diary observations of Chinese customs and practices that caught your attention.

3) Study Chinese banquet menus and devise a banquet for the Macartney mission. There should be one menu for the principals and another for everybody else. Who gets what? How would the banquets be served?

4) Describe some of the sites that Macartney and co. visited, including the Great Wall and the Forbidden City in Beijing, and the Grand Canal down which they traveled on the way home. If you can find a description of the Qing emperors' summer quarters in Jehol (Rehe), describe that. Imagine yourself as an 18th century American visiting these places. (If that is too difficult, imagine visiting them as yourself today).

5) Put together a list of gifts to accompany the Macartney mission. What would they bring to demonstrate British accomplishment? What would you bring, if you had been sent to visit the Chinese emperor at the end of the 18th century?

6) Prepare an outline of events which occurred between the Macartney mission and the First Opium War (1839-42) affecting British-Chinese relations. Why do you think the British ended up going to war with China?

7) Find out what you can about the Confucian concept of the "Mandate of Heaven". How does Heaven (and the natural order) interact with human society and government according to this theory? How does this interaction affect the conduct of government in Imperial China as illustrated in this play? See if you can figure out to what extent the Mandate of Heaven still influences government in China?

Resources:

Peyrefitte, Alain. The Immobile Empire. New York: Knopf, 1992. 630 pp. Detailed, substantially documented, but non-technical study of the Macartney Mission by a retired French diplomat. Some great color illustrations.

Wakeman, Frederic, Jr. The Fall of Imperial China. New York: The Free Press, 1975. Chapter 7, "The Western Intrusion", gives a clear and concise account of how trade developed between Britain and China and why opium came to figure so

prominently. Although this source is twenty years old, Wakeman is an excellent historian and leading China specialist. O.k. for juniors and seniors.

Spence, Jonathan D. The Search for Modern China. New York: Norton, 1990. Chapter 6, "China and the [Western] Eighteenth-Century World", contains sections on "Aliens and Chinese Law" and "Western Images of China", which help to give depth to the differences in perceptions and expectations which erupted between the West and China in the late 18th century of Western time and late Qianlong era of Chinese/Qing dynasty time. If you're interested in learning more about modern China, this book is one good place to start.

Fairbank, John King. China: A New History. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, Belknap Press, 1992. Broad study drawing on much recent scholarship. The author devoted his life to increasing American understanding and study of modern China. The text has useful passages introducing such concepts as Mandate of Heaven, tribute system, etc. The author's broad focus is on the Qing dynasty and the 20th century.

Qianlong Meets Macartney:
Collision of Two World Views

A One Act Play

Dramatis Personae

English Side:	*Chinese Side:*
First Narrator	Third Narrator
Second Narrator	Fourth Narrator
The Right Honorable George Lord Macartney	His Supreme Majesty, the Qianlong Emperor
Sir George Staunton	Heshen (Chief Minister)
Thomas Staunton, his son (aged 12)	Zhengrui (Imperial Legate)
Father Jacobus Li (Mr Plumb)	(see note at end on pronunciation of names)

Prologue

First Narrator: Hello everyone. Welcome to our play! Imagine a time when people in Europe and America knew very little about China, except that it was the place to buy tea and silk—and maybe sell a little opium. In the late 18th century the British were already in India and buying more and more Chinese tea. We needed outlets to sell our industrial manufactures. China would have been just right—except for the antiquated trade system at Canton.

Third Narrator: What antiquated trade system? These Western barbarians could never get it right. We've had an empire going for 2,000 years. Most of the time it works fine. We provide order and stability, and a center around which things can revolve. We've also got the culture that makes it all worth while. The barbarians bring tribute, and that's right, since they don't have anything to trade except rubbish that nobody wants. That's the way it is.

First Narrator: See what I mean? It's going to be hard to crack this nut. It's like the irresistable force and the immovable object. But, as you'll see, *we're* irresistable!

Third Narrator: Irresistable my foot. Turtles' eggs, if you ask me!

Scene One: The Voyage Begins

Second Narrator: It is 1792. Eager to promote trade, and disatisfied with the Canton system, the British Government appoints an Embassy to negotiate with the Chinese sovereign. The Embassy seeks to open new ports for trade, arrange for a place where British merchants can live year round, and establish a permanent mission in Peking. The Embassy is to be led by Lord Macartney.

Macartney: That's me. I'm the Ambassador. I speak Latin, Greek, French and Italian. I've traveled all over Europe, then I led a mission to Russia. I've been governor general of the British West Indies and governor of Madras. I survived a duel with a major general. I'm an Irish baron but married well and expect to become an English Lord. Call me an educated man! [*Dusts off clothing*]

SecondNarrator: Yes, your Lordship. As I was saying. We set off in late September with three ships and almost 700 men. The Ambassador was accompanied by his right hand man, Sir George Leonard Staunton.

Staunton: (*clears throat).* Ah, yes.... I'm a doctor of medicine and doctor of law, and a literary type, don't you know. I was in Grenada when his Lordship showed up. We got together, and here I am, a sort of right hand man, I suppose. I wrote a book about our travels, which the great Hegel studied. [*To Narrator*] Carry on.

Second Narrator: Thank you, Sir George. Staunton was accompanied by his twelve year old son, George Thomas, who served as his Lordship's page. Everyone calls him Tom.

Tom: It was a lot of fun going to China. I learned Chinese on the trip from some really cool Chinese priests who had been living in Italy and spoke Latin. My father got a hold of them to come with us. My main teacher we call Mr Plumb, because his name is Li, meaning Plumb. That's him over there. He doesn't speak English, so we talk in Latin. I even learned to write those weird characters. I got to meet the Emperor, who gave me his silk purse. I found out a lot of things and wrote it all up in my secret journal. It's got all the stuff the grown-ups didn't want to talk about.

Mr Plumb: (*aside*) He's a good boy. Very clever. Much smarter than his dad.

Second Narrator: O.k. Enough of introductions. His Lordship and Sir George spent the voyage reading up everything they could about China. When he was in Russia, Macartney met a man who had worked on border problems with the Chinese. He said the Chinese had a superiority complex. If you weren't Chinese you were a barbarian.

Macartney: Right. Bratischev was pretty uncomplimentary about those people. Said they were ignorant as hell. Quite right, too. They don't know a damn thing about England. Thought the earth was square and China in the middle of it. Ye gods! But it was Montesquieu who got my attention. Called China a despotic state whose principle is fear. According to him they're obsessed with rites. Especially the kowtow. Spend all their time bowing and scraping. Haven't caught up with the times. No science. We'll have to do something about that.

First Narrator: And his Lordship was the man to do it. In March 1793 we arrived in Batavia, in the Dutch East Indies. What a hell hole! Full of dysentery, not to mention pirates. We lost a few men but pressed on, and arrived at Macao on June 20th with four ships.

Scene Two: Up the Coast to Tianjin

Second Narrator: Well, here we are at long last off the coast of China. What a to do. The government already knows about our Embassy. That's because the Company....

First Narrator: East India Company to you lot....

Second Narrator: ...told them His Majesty King George was sending an envoy.

Third Narrator: I think I'd better cut in here, or you won't know what is really going on. These red-haired barbarians keep wanting to send envoys. That's fine with us. They can send who they like. By the way, have you ever seen anything as crazy as a red haired barbarian? Their talk sounds like dogs barking, and their noses are like, well, so ugly and big. Of course they haven't the slightest idea how to behave. So ill-mannered!

Fourth Narrator: We heard from the governor of Guangdong that this red-haired king was planning to send a mission to pay tribute on the occasion of our emperor's birthday. Their leader has this strange name: MA-GA-ER-NI. What a mouthful. See if you can say it! *(Repeats "MA-GA-ER-NI", stressing each syllable).* They missed our emperor's 80th birthday by two years. Such ignorant people. Still, at least they may learn something about civilization.

Third Narrator: Our Emperor said they could sail up the coast; but since they're foreign devils, we got to watch them like hawks.

Fourth Narrator: And if they're bringing useless trinkets, we'll just have to turn them back.

Staunton: We fobbed the locals off with some lists of gifts that made their eyes pop, then set off up the coast. I got off at some islands to look around. Found that the farmers manure their fields with—can you believe it?—human droppings. Oh my God! The stench. Still, they're pretty industrious. But when we saw the bound feet on the women—oh dear, oh dear. What a preposterous practice!

Macartney: Come on, George. Look what we do with our women. It's a sexual fetish, old boy.

Third Narrator: (*to Fourth Narrator*) Can you beat these Europeans? Look at all the grease and powder on their hair. And all that ridiculous tight-bottomed clothing. They look like ghosts and demons. Better watch out!

Macartney: The important thing is, George, they've got nothing to compare with our ships. Can we get some pilots to take us into the Yellow sea?

Staunton: I'll see what I can do, Sir. But don't count on it. Their pilots are an ignorant, scurvy bunch. We may have to navigate on our own.

Fourth Narrator: The English barbarians have made unexpectedly swift progress. Any day now they will land off Tianjin. Their tribute gifts have to be unloaded. Our Chief Minister, He Shen, has appointed officials to take care of this.

Scene Three: The Forces Converge

First Narrator: Now that we're about to land, His Lordship has to give the troops their marching orders.

Macartney: Gentlemen, you must conduct yourselves with peculiar caution and mildness, so as to enhance the renown of the English name. If there is any misconduct, I shall consider it my duty to punish any offender—and if need be to let Chinese justice take its course. So be it!

Third Narrator: While these ridiculous foreign devils strut around, our Imperial Court is going to great care and expense to see that they are properly treated. Our Sage Emperor himself is supervising the plans.

Emperor: (*To Heshen*) Not too much ceremony, not too little. Since the envoy is coming from afar to gaze on Our Face, he can be invited to a banquet or two and receive some gifts, along with the Burmese and Pathans. Then they should be sent home.

Heshen: Your slave has appointed officials to supervise the task.

Emperor: You can appoint that junior salt commissioner Zhengrui as Imperial Legate to supervise the barbarians and instruct them in etiquette. That should teach them a lesson in modesty.

Zhengrui: What a dreadful assignment. These English dogs are unbelievably arrogant. Look at all the rubbish they brought! But how could I refuse to obey our Sage Ruler? It took hours to unload their stuff and 35 junks to carry it. Now we've got to attend to their daily needs. And I have to teach them basic manners. Oh, dear.

Third Narrator: we arranged for MA-GA-ER-NI and his aides to meet with our Governor General. They were instructed to report to the Emperor at his summer retreat in Rehe (Jehol). MA-GA-ER-NI seemed a bit upset. Apparently he thought he would be received in Peking. What cheek! Our Governor General overlooked their vulgar behavior. He sent them his visiting card, then we proceeded upriver.

First Narrator: Yes, we're sailing up past all these hordes of people standing on the banks gawking at us. We've just learned that the banners on their ships are calling this a tribute mission. Our incredible gifts tribute! His Lordship was ready to blow up.

Macartney: You can imagine my consternation. Of course I kept our larger goals in sight.

Second Narrator: But there was worse to come. The mandarins started talking about the kowtow. Their attitude stiffened. They kept saying that we would have to do it.

Zhengrui: The barbarians had no idea that they should dress up and respectfully kowtow to the Emperor's documents, his meals, every expression of his authority. What turtles' eggs they are. They even can't eat with chopsticks. I am trying to teach them as best I can. I've reported to the Emperor that they are deeply ashamed of their loutish behavior and are practising the kowtow—well, sort of. The Chief Minister said they wouldn't get an audience till they did it. Up to now MA-GA-ER-NI merely takes off his hat. Can you imagine! What on earth am I going to do? (*Wrings his hands*).

Fourth Narrator: We unloaded their tribute from ships onto caravans and escorted them to our glorious capital. The english barbarians were treated with great kindness and entertained with numerous banquets.

Third Narrator: Yup. It was spectacular. People were pressing all around, just stupified at the sight of all these foreign devils. You should've seen them eating. What a mess. We laughed till our sides ached.

First Narrator: Where the hell do all these Chinese people come from? Now that we're on land you can't get away from them. No privacy. I mean, have you ever had 100 people watch you swallow every bite?

Tom: Papa. Papa. When are we going to see the Emperor?

Mr Plumb: Hush, boy. Your father's busy with his memoirs.

Staunton: (*writing in diary*) Hm..., yes. We observed the agricultural practices, and the labor required of peasant women. Notwithstanding their merit, the husbands arrogate an extraordinary dominion over them....

Macartney: And the mandarins are trying to do the same with us, George. More of their foppish court ceremonial. They can't seem to get it that we have our proprieties too. English dignity is at stake! They may rule the land, but we rule the seas. I'll have to write a letter.

Scene Four: Final Preparations

Second Narrator: After we arrived in Peking, they unpacked our gifts and we began to assemble the planetarium. It took 18 days. Since their notions of astronomy are quite antiquated, we're hoping that our scientific equipment will help to get them up-to-date.

First Narrator: Meanwhile His Lordship wrote this letter saying he would kowtow to the Emperor if a Chinese official kowtowed to a picture of our king.

Tom: It had to be translated from English to Latin to Chinese to Court Chinese. I wrote out the characters, because nobody else dared to.

Fourth Narrator: Meanwhile, in Rehe....

Emperor: (*to Heshen*) Zhengrui's reports are deceitful. His ideas are a muddle. He is contemptible and ridiculous.

Heshen: (*reassuring*) Your slave has informed the responsible officials that they are unworthy and odious. Should we proceed with this business?

Emperor: Yes. Let the english envoys come, then send them away, quickly.

*****(*brief pause*)*****

Fourth Narrator: It is ten days later. The Barbarian mission has arrived. Their leader pretended to be indisposed, so SI-TAN-TON presented their letters to our Chief Minister.

Heshen: (*to Emperor*) The barbarians object to our court ritual.

Emperor: (*angry*) Let them kneel and bow once. Reduce their supplies, and degrade that idiot Zhengrui.

Zhengrui: (*aside*) Of course. I get blamed for everything. As if I started this mess! What's a man to do? (*shakes his head*).

Heshen: Your slave has learned that they greet their king by kneeling on one knee and kissing his hand.

Emperor: (*startled*) Kissing? How revolting. Let them kneel on one knee. But no kissing! (*shudders*).

Heshen: Their boorish behavior must not be allowed to disrupt our ceremonies.

Emperor: Let it be recorded that they were respectful but ignorant. Send them away as soon as the birthday ceremonies are completed.

Scene Five: The Climax

Second Narrator: We left for the Emperor's Court at 3:00 in the morning. It was pitch dark....

First Narrator: On the way we tripped over a bunch of bloody pigs and dogs. I got my breeches torn.

Second Narrator: Then we waited three hours till the Emperor's cortege arrived.

Tom: Everybody kowtowed. We knelt and bowed our heads.

Second Narrator: The Emperor went in to his tent. Then we approached.

Third Narrator: When MA-GA-ER-NI ascended the platform to the throne and saw the Son of Heaven, his legs trembled so much that he fell flat on his face. Clumsy oaf. Still, he kowtowed. That's for sure. It's in our records.

Tom: It was like this. Lord Macartney, my father, Mr Plumb, and I went to the edge of the platform. Lord Macartney climbed up, presented the letter from the King and some small presents, then came down.

Fourth Narrator: Naturally we made sure he didn't talk directly to our Sage Emperor or hand Him anything in person. That would have been a terrible violation of the rites.

Tom: Then my papa and I went up and made the ceremony.

Staunton: The Emperor invited the Embassador's page up to his throne and desired him to speak Chinese. Then he took from his girdle a purse and presented it to him. Quite an honor for the lad, don't you think?

First Narrator: More likely a little bit of you know what! Randy old man!

Macartney: There were also three ambassadors from Pegu and six from the Kalmucks. Their appearance was not very splendid.

First Narrator: A banquet followed for all the high-ups. Then we were escorted back to our residence. And that was that.

Second Narrator: His Lordship did encounter the Emperor one more time, at an entertainment.

First Narrator: Twice actually. At the first, gifts were exchanged, the usual stuff. All pure formality. At the second we got up as usual at 3:00 waited for hours with all the Court, then knelt as the Emperor went by. Then it was back to Peking. His Lordship was fit to be tied!

Scene Six: Departure

Second Narrator: Back in Peking His Lordship attempted to explain to the Chief Minister the purposes of his mission.

Third Narrator: But we brushed his talk aside, told him it was time to leave, and presented our Imperial rescript.

Fourth Narrator: Our Emperor explained, as graciously as possible, that it was nice of these english subjects to bring their tribute, but we didn't need any of it. As for their proposals, these were simply out of order and could not be countenanced. Then He commanded them to return safely home.

Second Narrator: The condescending old dodo really let us have it. The missionaries toned down the translation, so that Macartney wouldn't get too angry.

Macartney: So the matter is now settled. Dammit. How frustrating. But we can't give up.

First Narrator: Can't we? We entered Peking like paupers. We remained like prisoners. We quit like vagrants. I say let's get the hell out.

Macartney: On the way south I discussed our concerns with the Imperial viceroys accompanying us. They seemed to take an interest. Perhaps we may achieve something after all.

Mr Plumb: (*to audience*) But I know better. They were just humoring the old boy. I've seen it all before.

Fourth Narrator: We escorted them back to Canton, making sure that none of them disobeyed our commands. Then they set sail and departed, after promising to send further tribute missions.

Afterwords

First Narrator: The news of our embassy's churlish treatment caused some inconvenience to his Lordship on our return to England.

Second Narrator: But after their accounts were published, European people began to realize the problems of dealing with China. Praise gave way to disparagement.

First Narrator: And anger. They couldn't go on treating our embassies like that. For one thing, their navy was a joke. We could blow them sky high—and when the war came we did!

Second Narrator: But what was worse, they were way behind the times and didn't know it. The day would come when they would find out.

Tom: How ironic that it came because of the opium trade.

Fourth Narrator: (*musing*) After they went to war with us, the British foreigners got everything that MA-GA-ER-NI wanted, and more. And for 150 years they kept it all. We had to be very patient.

Third Narrator: But we didn't forget. And now it's 1997, and Hong Kong's back in our hands. We get the last laugh. Ha-ha-ha!

The End

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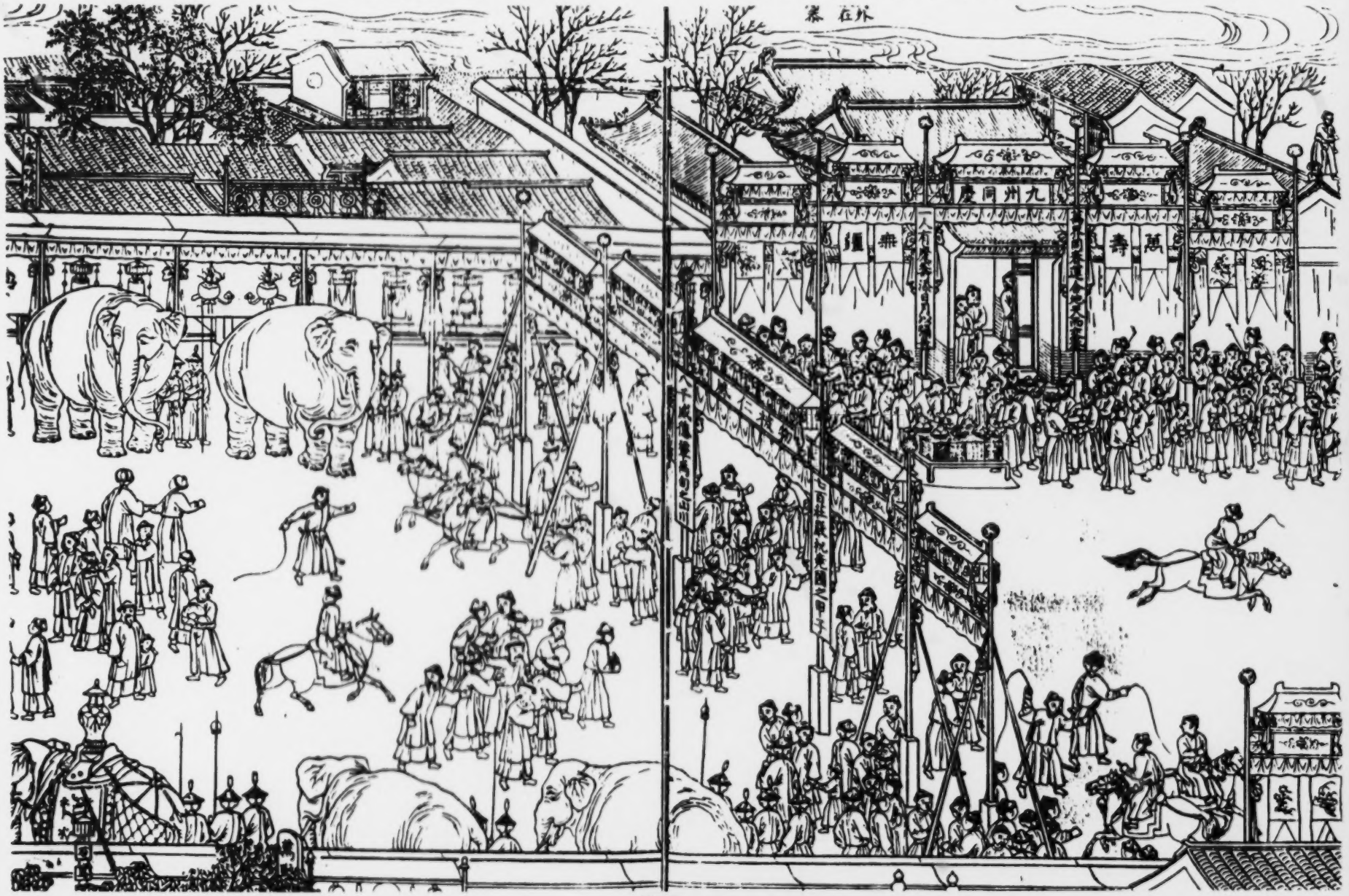
Data and some verbatim lines courtesy of Alain Peyrefitte. The Immobile Empire. New York: Knopf, 1992.

Note on pronunciation of Chinese names:

There are no foolproof rules for getting these names right, but it will help the play to get them somewhat right. "Q" in the Chinese pinyin system is pronounced like a very sybillant "ch". Thus Qing becomes something like Cheeng or tching, and Qianlong becomes something like tchienlung. "Zh" has the same sound as English "J" (not French J), thus Zhengrui should be pronounced something like Jengruey. Heshen is easier. Prounounce "He" as in english "Per" or "Her" but without 'r' sound, and "shen" as in Atten*tion*!Thus, "Hershen". Tones are another matter. If you have a Chinese language teacher in your school, ask for help!

A parade of elephants, gifts from a southern tributary, are part of the birthday celebration of Emperor K'ang

hsi in 1711. Court painters, directed by Wang Yuan-chi, recorded the scene. This is a modest version of the original art



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"The Reception of the Diplomatique & his Suite, at the Court of Pekin"
James Gillray, September 14, 1792

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